

# Family to Family in Washington State

## What is Family to Family?

Family to Family (F2F) is a Children's Administration approach to help improve the lives of the children and families we serve. Developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and occurring in many states across the nation, Family to Family is designed to:

- Increase the number of children safely maintained in the home of their birth families
- Increase the number of children placed in their own neighborhoods or communities when foster care is required
- Reduce the number of children served in institutional or group care (and shift those resources to kinship care, family foster care and family-centered services)
- Decrease the length of stay of children in placement
- Increase the number of children reunified with their birth families
- Decrease the number of children re-entering care following reunification
- Reduce the number of placement moves children in care experience
- Increase the number of siblings placed together
- Reduce disparities associated with race/ethnicity, gender and/or age

## Family to Family is comprised of four key strategies:

### 1. Family Team Decision-Making (FTDMs)

FTDMs are meetings held whenever a placement decision needs to be made. The meetings are attended by the parents, the child (unless inappropriate), relatives, friends, neighbors, community members, service providers, caregivers, social workers, supervisors and the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) if assigned. Teams work together to address the safety concerns and to create a network of support for the child and the adults who care for the child.

### 2. Building Community Partnerships (BCP)

BCP seeks to create a collaborative relationship with communities where child protection referrals are high to support at-risk families and build stronger neighborhoods.

### 3. Self-Evaluation

Hard data is collected about child and family outcomes to provide key information on where we are making progress and where change is needed.

### 4. Recruitment, Development and Support of resource families (RDS)

The goal of RDS is to find and maintain foster and kinship families who can support children in their own neighborhoods.



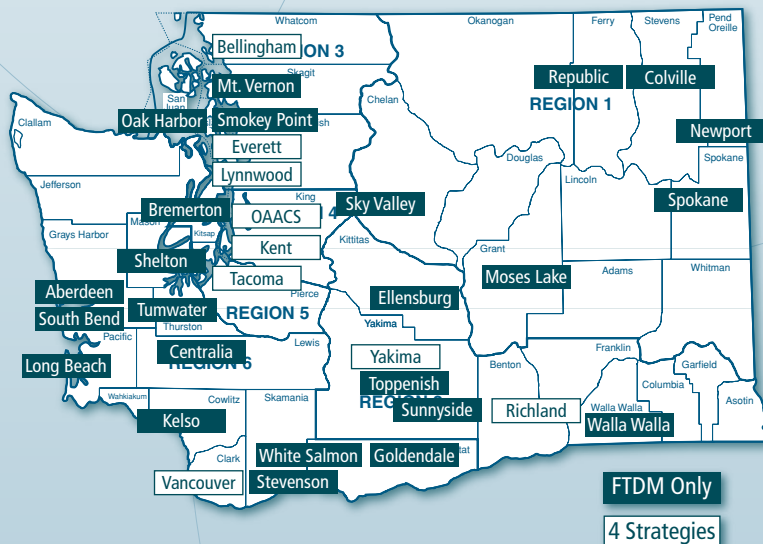
## What research is telling us about Family to Family

Research is an important part of Family to Family in Washington. Over time the trends have become more clear and the outcomes more and more promising. Specifically:

- FTDMs result in more children placed with relatives
- FTDMs result in a shortening of the length of stay for children placed with relatives
- FTDMs appear to increase placement stability and prevent placement moves
- FTDMs lead to more reunifications with biological parents

## Where is Family to Family occurring?

Thirty-three offices in the state are now implementing at least one aspect of F2F. A number of offices are actively developing all four strategies while others are initially only implementing FTDMs with the intention of adding the other three strategies as resources allow.



## What people are saying about Family to Family

“When parents, foster parents and friends team together to make decisions affecting children, kids are safer, family members feel empowered to make changes to help the family and the entire system benefits. Every Washington legislator should see the Family-Team Decision-Making program in action.” – *Senator Jerome Delvin, Richland*

“Family to Family is a compelling model for changing the child welfare system. Through the F2F model, families and communities partner with the public child welfare system so that children increasingly are able to remain safely with their families or, when that is not possible, to remain in their own communities, where their family are known and supported.” – *Nancy Roberts-Brown, Director, Catalyst for Kids*

“I’m thankful that my side was listened to, and I had a chance to speak about my progress and goals.” – *Parent*

“I think these (FTDM) meetings have had more of an effect on social work practice and attitudes toward families than anything Children’s Administration has done in recent years because they have given social workers a different kind of experience with families.” – *Dee Wilson, Director, Northwest Institute for Children and Families*

“I prefer these (FTDM) meetings to court. These meetings are very healthy for families.” – *Parent’s Attorney*

“As a case manager for a Tribal ICW department, I am deeply grateful for the FTDM model. The FTDM process is incredibly healing and felt quite natural in the Tribal setting. There is such a wealth of family resources within tribes; the FTDM is a powerful tool to tap into this strength.” – *John Meyer, Case Manager Tribal Indian Child Welfare*

“A FTDM is a supportive, revealing process that empowers its participants, creates unexpected teams, and gives some solid shape to a case. FTDM’s demonstrate social/human service work at its best and speak to what is shining in our agency – collaborative work with individuals, families and agencies.” – *Social worker*

“I believe that this was a worthwhile meeting.” – *Foster Parent*

“Family to Family provides the means to engage families in the decision-making process. Our research is showing that this leads to more placements with relatives, more stable placements (in general) and more successful reunifications with parents”. – *David Marshall, PhD, Children’s Administration Program Evaluator*

“This process gives an overall view from all those involved in a child’s life.” – *Guardian Ad Litem*